



Testimony Before the
Appropriations and Human Services Committees

*Social Services and Community Services
Block Grant Allocation Plans*

Claudette J. Beaulieu
Deputy Commissioner for Programs
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Good afternoon, Senators Harp and Doyle, Representatives Geragosian and Walker and members of the committees. My name is Claudette Beaulieu and I am the Deputy Commissioner for Programs at the Department of Social Services. Thank you for this opportunity to review the Governor's recommended allocation plans for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

Social Services Block Grant

The FFY 2010 SSBG Allocation Plan provides funding for services in 12 of 29 federally defined service categories, including case management, counseling, family planning services, home-based services, independent and transitional living services, information and referral, legal services, protective services for adults, special services for persons with developmental disabilities, persons with visual or auditory impairments and substance abuse.

For FFY 2009, the SSBG was funded at a national level of \$1.7 billion. Connecticut's available SSBG dollars included the final block grant award of \$19,629,594 and \$849,106 in carry-over funds, for a total of \$20,478,700. Historically, the federal funding available for the SSBG program has decreased substantially over the years. In 1998, Connecticut received \$28,494,775 in SSBG funding and each year since then it has been reduced to the present level. Connecticut receives approximately 30% less in SSBG funding in 2009 than what was received in 1998.

For the FFY 2010 SSBG Allocation Plan, since Congress has not yet approved an SSBG allocation, the Department of Health and Human Services has directed us to submit our allocation plan based upon the President's proposed SSBG funding level of \$1.7 billion, which is the same level as was approved by Congress for FFY 2009. The FFY 2010 SSBG Allocation Plan before you is based upon a funding level of \$19,629,594. We do not anticipate having any carry-over funds from FFY 2009 and, therefore, our total funding level for FFY 2010 is \$19,629,594.

The amount of total funding available is approximately 4% lower than our total funding for FFY 2009. Please note that actual allocations from HHS to the states can vary, based on the state's increase or decrease in population. We have not been notified of any projected changes to date.

It is anticipated that Congress will maintain the SSBG funding level at the \$1.7 billion level similar to prior years. We will not be sure of this until the federal budget is voted on and passed by both houses. (Our final 2009 SSBG allocation was not known until January of this year.) We remain hopeful that Congress will provide level funding for this important block grant. In the event that the anticipated dollars are less or more, our SSBG allocation plan includes contingency language to adjust allocations in proportion to amounts shown in the plan.

As in prior years, the SSBG plan includes \$26,678,810 that will be transferred from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. The transfer of TANF funds to the SSBG is reflected in the department's budget, as approved by the General Assembly. These

funds must be appropriated to grantees that operate programs providing services to children and their families. The bulk of these funds provide services for child care, children's residential services, emergency shelters and the human services infrastructure. A list of the specific programs, amounts transferred from TANF for those programs and the appropriate SSBG service category are included in the plan on page 8.

Community Services Block Grant

Although the federal budget has not been finalized, we anticipate the federal award to Connecticut will be \$8,404,600. This amount represents a slight increase over our FFY 2009 award.

CSBG is the core funding source for the state's community action network. Community action agencies (CAAs) help low-income people to become self-sufficient. The community action network improves living conditions and helps people have a stake in their community. Working in partnership with other service providers, businesses, and the faith-based and the advocacy communities, CAAs strengthen families and their environments, which help low-income people to lead more secure lives.

CSBG funds support a wide range of services and activities having a measurable impact on the causes of poverty in areas of the community where poverty is a particularly acute problem. Funds can be used for:

- addressing the needs of youth in low-income communities;
- securing and retaining meaningful employment;
- attaining an adequate education;
- making better use of available income;
- obtaining and maintaining adequate housing and a suitable living environment; and
- administrative and support costs that are not covered by other funds.

The state's 12 community action agencies operate other vital programs, such as energy assistance, eviction prevention, weatherization and child day care. Last year, the CAAs provided services to 294,232 Connecticut residents.

This year, the department moved to update the allocation formula used in the distribution of funds to CAAs, using 2000 census data rather than the 1990 census data, to more accurately target and reflect the population to be served. Census data provides information relative to the numbers of individuals in poverty in the towns and cities throughout the state. We felt the timing

would work well to institute this change as we are receiving CSBG-American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding this year, and the receipt of these additional funds would offset any reduction in funding to any particular CAA that would be affected by the revised funding formula. This has been an issue of discussion over the last several years with our CAA partners as we looked to improve our funding formula and recognize population shifts; however, we were reluctant to make this change in previous years, as we didn't want to cause any undue hardship to those CAAs that would be affected adversely with the revised formula.

At DSS, we continue to work closely with the CAAs to blend the federal CSBG and state Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) funding to maximize CAA resources in these challenging fiscal times. This unique partnership represents a real commitment to improve Connecticut's human service delivery system and ensures a more consistent experience for providers and clients. The framework of this system is a "one-stop" model of human service delivery called HSI, a system that enables the community action agencies to work as a single services network, and to report on the outcomes of services and document the progress of low-income people toward self-sufficiency.

The CAAs use CSBG funds to leverage additional resources and develop innovative approaches to building the assets of low-income people and their communities. In 2008, the 12 community action agencies reported leveraging a total of more than \$221 million in additional federal, state, local and private funds.

This year's plan continues to address contingencies if level funding is not received. Any increases most likely would be proportionately shared across the CAA network, but in the event of any significant cuts to funding, some restructuring, consolidation and sharing of resources would have to occur.

We ask your approval of both these allocation plans. Thank you again for this opportunity to come before you to discuss these plans and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.